THE LABOR PARTY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR A SOCIALIST CANADA

2nd in a series of 4 talks by Ross Dowson

"The development of the CCF"

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(Introduction by Jim Mitchell) This is on the Labor Party in Canada, and the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and our orientation towards it, and as you know from the outline, what we are going to attempt to cover tonight is a very, very large question. It's the formation of the CCF and its development up until just before the formation of the NDP as we know it today, which grew out of that movement (…) so I would like to introduce Ross Dowson who will speak tonight on "The development of the CCF."

(Ross Dowson speaking) Well, comrades and friends, the discussion was a very good discussion last week but in a way it was dispersed in directions which from the point of view of the class itself are not too valuable. I know they were interesting to talk about the Thirties and to get a broader picture of certain developments, but I think it is very desirable to keep it as close as possible on the class. We have the same problem tonight – a very vast subject. And what I want to do first is to try to define what I said last week – the outline concepts – so that it will pull it together and not tend to disperse it.

The series is called "The labor party and the struggle for a socialist Canada." There is perhaps no country in the world where the experience with what could be called the labor party – the labor party experience – is as fruitful and as varied as in Canada. And last night I tried to give a bit of an introduction to this. There's a slogan that is sometimes inscribed in the columns of the *Young Socialist, (journal of the Canadian Young Socialists, in solidarity with the LSA)* – perhaps you have read it – it says, "It takes revolutionaries to make a revolution." That's what were talking about, the making of a revolution in this country, the struggle for a socialist Canada. Yes, it takes revolutionaries to make a revolution. It takes a revolutionary program and an organization –revolutionaries need to be organized, in a party of a vanguard type to make the revolution in this country.

No one else can make the revolution – it can't be made with any other blunted or inadequate tool, other than a vanguard party. This party as I attempted to say last week, got under way in a serious sense with the formation of what became known at that time as the Communist Party of Canada in 1921. However, there were antecedents of that party. It was the fusion of the best currents, the most far-reaching elements of the generation of that time, a fusion of those persons who were in the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Party of Canada, the Social-Democratic Party of Canada, and other formations. But that process of building the revolutionary vanguard necessary to make the revolution got underway in '21.

By 1929, as I said, this party that had been constructed in 1921, with the expulsion of *(Maurice)* Spector and *(Jack)* MacDonald. That marked the Stalinization of that party, that formation that was launched in 1921. That didn't mean the end of the struggle of course – we're the continuity of it. As a matter of fact, Spector and MacDonald continued to struggle despite their expulsion – despite their being deprived of an opportunity to talk to the cadre that had been gathered and pulled together in 1921. They carried on that struggle, and of course as you know, the forces that have continued to struggle have become known as "Trotskyists" but they are just orthodox Marxist-Leninists, who were the basic core of that party in 1921.

Now the revolutionary socialists don't make the movement, the total movement of the working class themselves. As a matter of fact we come into a working class movement that is already structured. In 1921 the young Communist Party already came into a structured working class movement. There was a union movement – true, it was small, compared to the union

movement today – but it was there, it was an important force, relatively, of course, an extremely important force. And there were the other formations.

So we come into a situation not of our own making, as revolutionary socialists. We come into a working class movement that is already structured. And new structures come out of the processes of the working class struggle, regardless of the consciousness, the will, the design of the revolutionary vanguard. They happen – and there are very good reasons for them – they happen, outside the will of the revolutionary vanguard forces. The class itself, by its own nature, the working class, this revolutionary class does not gravitate, come openly, clearly, in a direct way, to its own party, to its own forces; it has to **find** that party. And the nucleus of that party have to fuse with the radicalization, the radicalizing forces, to build that party. So there is a dual process. The working class are going, developing, semi-consciously, unconsciously, in a way that makes it possible to build the revolutionary vanguard party, and then, unevenly, there are conscious elements that are trying to go about and build that party.

Now already in 1906, before the organization of the Communist Party, in 1906, I referred to an experience, a labor party experience, that was a labor party projection made by the Trades and Labour Congress, that was the central trade union movement at that time. Draper, who was head of the Trades and Labour Congress, passed a motion at that congress – he initiated it—that called for the building of a labor party. The socialists, as I reported, at that time opposed it. Frontally opposed it, I think correctly. Because they saw the projection of a labor party by the trade union bureaucracy of that time as an attempt to block the socialization of radically developing workers, an attempt to divert it and block the workers who were radicalizing from coming to the Socialist Party – that's how they saw that.

That was an experience where the revolutionary socialists, our predecessors, stood frontally opposed to the development of what was made out to be a labor party. We said no, it's a diversion and we fought against it. And, of course, as things happened, it never bore fruit – it died. By 1909, as I related, the whole pressure had dissipated for that labor party formation. Then there was another experience in 1921 which I related, and that was the moves to build the Canadian Labour Party. That was a very interesting experience, and I don't want to go into the details, but I think you will recall that party was projected as a united front, in a sense not a party, but a federated movement, in which the Communists took a very sensitive and I think correct attitude towards it. They became a part of it – they became a component part of that so-called Canadian Labour Party. But

that was not a party, in the traditional sense; with a structure, with an established leadership. As I related last week, the leaders of the Communist Party particularly (…) Jack Macdonald and Malcolm Bruce became leaders in the Canadian Labour Party while they were leaders in the Communist Party of Canada. That was not a party in the strict and normal meaning of the word – it was a united front, and of course it could only have a temporary character – it would inevitably blow up because a party isn't a united front when it is composed of such divergent elements that it was composed of. And it blew apart. It also suffered the impact of a decline in the radicalization.

Then I skipped into another experience which was part of the responsibility for some of the derailment of the discussion. I took up the question of another political formation which became a labor party, and that was the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), which was founded in 1933. I jumped from the Canadian Labour Party experience to the formation of the CCF, which was not a labor party when it was formed, when it was launched, but *(which)* subsequently evolved into a labor party formation. And I dealt with the attitude of (…) those elements which considered themselves revolutionary socialists, to that development – and I think you will recall that I pointed out that the Trotskyists in whatever organized form they had at that period, they identified themselves with that development, they supported it; they gave critical support to this formation – whereas the Communist Party, at one point having taken an ultraleftist position, subsequently taking a right-wing position, a popular front position – attempted to block the development of this formation.

How the Communist Party allowed the diversion of the CCF to take root

Now, I'm now moving onto a whole new field — having established that material. The Communist Party of course entered into the arena in a very favorable situation. Although the radicalization process was declining, it pulled together extremely important and valuable revolutionary cadre. And in the process of trying to give you a picture of the development of the CCF, I made some comments about the whole climate that developed in the '30s *(and)* the rise of the CIO (*industrial unions-ed.)* – it was incidental, strictly incidental, irrelevant to this topic, really.

At any rate, what was relevant was that the Communist Party had some important cadre. Despite its political bankruptcy, it had pulled together some important cadre. I think the case could be very readily

established that the role of the Communist Party in the '30s laid the basis for the development of the CCF; permitted it to develop, and thereby permitted what for a whole period was a diversion from the development of revolutionary vanguard forces. It is the contention of this part of my talk, that the CCF in its early period was a **diversion** from the development of a labor party, and was only possible because of the mistaken policies of the Communist Party. And as I related, you'll recall, the Communist Party took an ultraleftist position when it called the CCF "social fascist" *(which)* rendered it incapable of meeting the radical workers who were becoming susceptible to some new radical appeal, because it condemned this party, at the nascent stage of its development, as a fascist, quasi-fascist formation. That certainly allowed the CCF to develop, in a reformist way, and then of course it *(the CPC—ed.)* took another position, at a later stage, where it came out for a coalition with the Liberal Party, and attacked the CCF from the right – attacked it from the right, and therefore radicals tended to congeal around the CCF. So I think we could say that the CFF to a large degree, because of the mistaken and false policies of the Communist Party, developed as a reformist party in the Canadian body politic.

Now I want to deal with the development of the CCF tonight – the topic is "the development of the CCF" – okay. It starts off as a third-party formation. Now I want to deal with the evolution of this movement – I think it's more correct to talk about its evolution. It was organized in 1933 *(1932 was the year of the CCF founding convention –ed.),* as you can see, a very important period, of the depression, *(with)* the masses just coming out of the first paralyzing experience of the depression – trying to find their feet, trying to move out, and to protect themselves, and trying to organize. At this conjuncture the CCF was organized, initiated in 1933. It exists and spans the period until 1961, which as you probably know is when the New Democratic Party was launched. So it spans a period of almost thirty years, a very important period in Canadian labor history. As a matter of fact, it didn't even end in 1961 because the leading personalities of the CCF are still with us – David Lewis, for one; Coldwell, well he's on the edge, a father figure – but David Lewis, perhaps the most important figure who goes through that whole period – and there are a considerable number of other figures, including Tommy Douglas, etc.

Now in reality in this period we have **two** reformist parties; that's what we really have. We have the CCF, which was a reformist party, a party of parliamentary reform, and we have the Communist Party, subsequently known as the Labour Progressive Party. They're both reformist, but not identities. They're both reformist. The essential source of their reformism is quite different. The policies of the Communist Party above all are

determined by its connections with the Soviet bureaucracy, and the fact that it has become a pawn in the diplomatic maneuvers of the Soviet bureaucracy, and because except for a short period of ultraleftism, the whole thrust of the Soviet bureaucracy's policies has been to establish a *modus vivendi* of peaceful co-existence with the Canadian capitalist class – this party has had essentially, throughout the whole period, a reformist character. Its program has been reformist, although it is not reformist like the NDP *(the CCF)* because the source of its reformism is different. The source of the reformism of the CCF is **native**, in Canada. It's native in Canada. It's based on its commitment to the national State in Canada. That's *(the)* essential character of its reformism. This party was reformist from the very beginning, the CCF was, when it was launched in 1933 – reformist from the very beginning. Programmatically, it was reformist, even in the Regina Manifesto, a quite important, well-known document, the formation document of the CCF, and it was also reformist in its leadership. And the leadership is extremely important in a political party – the character of the leadership – they played an extremely important role, and a role which was much more important in a reformist party than any other type of political formation.

The CCF born as an agrarian Prairie protest movement

Okay, I'd like to give you a bit of the background of where the CCF comes from. It comes out of the radical populist sentiment that existed in the Prairie West in the 20s and of course into the 30s. There is a rather interesting book you might want to investigate sometime called *Agrarian Socialism* by Seymour Lipset, in which he makes a detailed analysis of the social composition and structure of the CCF, in the earlier period that I'm talking about. Nonetheless it is quite interesting and he gives you some insight into the origins of this movement, the composition of the movement, the personnel of this movement – extensive research in the CCF in Saskatchewan. It gives you a feeling of the times, and why this movement came out of the West, why this radicalization took place in the West. I'll just say a few words about it. For one thing, the West was settled late in the development of Canada – quite recent; the big wave of development of the West was at the turn of the *(twentieth)* century – 1910, 1915, 1920s – in this period. As a matter of fact, there was a member of the League that I used to go and see occasionally in the West – he lived in Wiseton (Roseton) and he told me that he was the person who broke the land in the whole area which he was in, and he went into this area – the Roseton-Biggar area – in 1907. He was the first person to move in – came

out on the railways, and opened the land there with his horses. So it's a very recently developed area. *(Break at end of 1st tape)*

(Start of 2nd tape) (…) and it was difficult for the bourgeoisie to establish the political alignment that had come out of a long period of struggles (and) conflicts that had been established in the East. It took some time to set up a political superstructure, and for the bourgeoisie to establish their control of politics in the West. All the more because the persons who went out West were sort of rebels, you might say – that was the frontier of Canada, and a good number of them were rebels – and Lipset gives some rather interesting information on these persons who came out and settled the West – what their background was. A good number of them were Anglo-Saxons, a very high percentage of them, but many of them had gone through, or associated themselves with the British Labour Party experience. (It) had been a very important experience in their political thinking – they came (out), already radicals, (…) with already a concept that they couldn't be part of the now establish parties, like the Liberals and Tories – they had the concept that there had to be some big change.

As a matter of fact, the nature of the economy which developed in the Prairie West established that even more firmly in their own mind, for as you know, the Western Prairies developed a one-crop economy. The farmers there didn't develop a mixed farm, and it wasn't a closed economy. The farmers couldn't live with the products they developed on their own farms – they produced in their great majority one, and perhaps two, crops. In some areas, it was just a one-crop grain, primarily wheat. They didn't have anything else on the farm – maybe just enough maybe to keep themselves, one or two cows, a pig or so. But their farms were not self-contained units in which they could establish a relationship with a local community in which they could sell their products; they were committed to meet and trade their product on the world market. This heightened their political outlook, their political concepts, and made them in a sense have a certain regional identity and need, and as a matter of fact thrust them against the Eastern power structure.

Their needs and their interest – just before I continue, their other big crop was of course cattle, in the Alberta area – their needs and their interests pitted them against the Eastern financial oligarchy. If you read some of the documents of the time, that's the terminology they use, very clearly and in a very class way, about the financial oligarchy in the East. They wanted to open the world market. They were dependent on an open world market *(for)* the disposal of their wheat, and they wanted cheap commodities in return. And this set them up as a region against the East,

and developed in their mind a certain radicalness – a commonness with one another, and a radicalism. They had high sectional needs.

The Winnipeg General Strike

As you know, one of the great events in Canadian labor history was the Winnipeg General Strike. It was not an accident that it developed in Winnipeg, and that it had repercussions through the West in 1919. Out of that of course there was a certain consolidation. The first members in the federal House ever elected by any left-wing formation came from Winnipeg – they were J.S. Woodsworth, who played a very distinctly secondary – not even secondary – (only) a passing role in the Winnipeg General Strike but nonetheless was thrust forward by it, and of course I think the other member was Heap, if I'm not mistaken, another leading participant – he was actually a leading participant in the Winnipeg General Strike.

` So what you had was a certain (…) radicalization and a crystallization of radical formations on the Prairies. When the world-wide economic crisis of capitalism hit the Prairies, it hit the Prairies particularly hard – the wheat crop couldn't be sold, *(and the)* farmers were engulfed by the product of their own farms. They became impoverished, incredibly impoverished. This radicalization blossomed forth and perhaps as you know, in one province it went the direction of Social Credit. At a very critical juncture in the radicalization process, a man by the name of Aberhardt came forward and with his demagogic concepts, his Social Credit economy theories, he was able to build a social movement which became a political party, the Social Credit Party of Alberta. It's since then evolved into a classic bourgeois party, an integral part of the Tory party – but that was a movement of radical protest.

In the province adjoining it, we had the development of the CCF, a product of the same radicalization, but which found within the resources of the population a nucleus of persons who were able to take it into a working-class, a sort of quasi-socialist, reformist, protest direction. And I think that Coldwell played an important role in that, in blocking, and diverting this radicalization in Saskatchewan from also going Social Credit. Of course while the farmers were radicalizing, there was a certain radicalization of particularly, petty-bourgeois professional people in the East, particularly in this level of the population. There was organized a group called the League for Social Reconstruction, and this group of intellectuals helped form the CCF and participate in the writing of the famous Regina Manifesto.

So the movement got underway in the Prairies among the farmers – it didn't really have any big support even in the cities. It is only recently, in the 1950s I think, that the Saskatchewan CCF really started to root itself in Saskatchewan cities. It was basically a movement of agricultural peoples, of farmers. That's what it was. And it was there that the first CCF government first came to office, in Saskatchewan, in June 1944, a big landslide victory of 47 of 52 seats, in '44. In 1946 the writers in *Labor Challenge* of that time, the press of League for Socialist Action, (or rather) its predecessors, characterized, in 1946, the CCF. This is how they saw the CCF – "Predominantly an agrarian, social-democratic party. "They called it a social-democratic party, a hard political formation, with a clear program, "with its primary base in the radicalism of the western farmers. It's membership in the major industrial centers of the East is primarily middle-class, with a small sprinkling of highly-skilled workers." That's how the revolutionary socialists in 1946 saw the CCF.

The CCF's radical founding document: The Regina Manifesto

Now I'd like just to make a small diversion to deal with the Regina Manifesto, a rather important historic document, and I think it has to be part of the picture. It's a very radical document – I don't know if many of you have come across it. It gives you a sort of feeling of the times. As a matter of fact, it subsequently became the pole around which the left wing of a very complex character containing revolutionaries and pacifists – all kinds of radicals – around which they jelled in the fight against the CCF leadership. It became the banner of struggle against the whole rightward course of the CCF as a political current. I think I might just read a few parts of it.

"The CCF is a federation of organizations whose purpose is the establishment in Canada of a co-operative commonwealth" -- that was the romantic (phrase) to mean socialist society – "in which the principal regulating production and distribution exchange will be the supplying of human need and not the making of profits" – much more radical than the foundation document of the New Democratic Party, which didn't project any new society at all. This projects a new type of society. "We aim to replace the present capitalist system" – that word has not been used in the New Democratic Party even now – "with its inherent injustice and inhumanity by a social order in which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated, and in which economic planning will supercede unregulated private enterprise," etc. I'm just skipping a few parts: "We

believe that these evils can be removed only in a planned and socialized economy in which our natural resources and the principal means of production and distribution are owned, controlled and operated by the people."

I'm just going to give you the radical parts first – I just about gave you the other parts (…) They called for the abolition of the Senate, of course, very clearly. The NDP is by no means committed to this position. It *(the Regina Manifesto)* says, "we stand resolutely against all participation in imperialist wars. Canada must refuse to be entangled in any more wars fought to make the world safe for capitalism" *(audience reactions)*. It has what it called an "emergency program." Really it's a program of immediate demands, but it called it an emergency program. "Emergency measures are however of only a temporary value, for the present depression is a sign of the mortal sickness of the whole capitalist system, and this sickness cannot be cured by the application of salves," band-aids, you might say. "These leave untouched the cancer, which is eating at the heart of our society, namely, the economic system in which our natural resources and our principal means of production and distribution are owned, controlled and operated for the private profit of a small proportion of our population. No CCF government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation a full program of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the co-operative commonwealth."

Well, when we hear this today, and we have our experience with the NDP, *(laughter from the audience)* it sounds extremely revolutionary, and what's the speaker here tonight saying it's "reformist" for? It sounds very revolutionary – it is, sounding very revolutionary. But really, that's a lot of rhetoric. That was a lot of rhetoric. When you get down to the real program, it's something else. But they gave us a lot of rhetoric, at that time. This party was completely a parliamentarist party, that's what its concept was. Parliamentarism is a supreme principle, embedded in the CCF from its very beginning, through which alone – and no other way – from which alone, change can come. That's what it committed itself to. "The social and economic transformation can be brought about by political action and the election of a government inspired by the ideal of a co-operative commonwealth and supported by a majority of the people."

"We do not believe in change by violence." It made the record, very clearly and unmistakably – they thought they had to make the record against any concept of violence. Perhaps its reformist character is most clearly revealed when you deal with external relations – what it calls "external relations" – in other words, how it sees Canada in the world – and

of course this is a world of great turmoil and tumult. If you just think back to '33 – fascism had just come to power, or *(was)* on the verge of coming to power in Germany, *(and there was)* a tremendous radicalization in Britain. Everybody who knew much knew that (with) the consolidation of fascist power in Germany, (we) were moving toward the second world war. And we knew that this would be a war even more horrifying than the war of World War 1 which was just (recent) in our memory.

So, on their external relations section they say "we believe that genuine international co-operation is incompatible with the capitalist regime which is in force in most countries" – it sounds not bad – and "the strenuous efforts which are needed to rescue the League of Nations from its present condition of mainly a league of mainly capitalist great powers. We stand resolutely against all participation in imperialist wars…" And then they go on and identify themselves with the British Commonwealth – "Within the British Commonwealth, Canada must maintain its autonomy as a completely self-governing nation. We must resist all attempts to build up a new economic British empire in place of the old political one, since such attempts regularly *(lend)* themselves to capitalist exploitation." But the pivot of their position is their proposal "to do everything in our power to advance the idea of international co-operation as represented by the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization."

This is the essence of their international strategy – they don't identify in any way, shape or form with the worldwide struggle of the masses either in the colonial world or anywhere else. They keep out of this whole area – they're a Canadian party, that doesn't get mucked up in any of these questions. They don't have any program, such as some of you are familiar with, such as are now being developed and projected in the mass movement. They don't have any concepts of mobilizing the masses in action, around basic and key issues of great concern to them. The movement is completely parliamentarist – completely parliamentarist – completely legal in its approach, out to change laws, to convince the bourgeois parties to meet these laws, or if they fail to do so, to replace these parties and enact these laws themselves. They don't have any concept that the masses are a key component of this great social change. I'll say a few more words about this a little later.

But that's their concept. And of course they not only commit the movement to parliament, but they commit the movement also to their parliamentary spokesmen -- it's quite logical. Their parliamentary spokesmen, their leadership, is really reformist to the core. As a matter of fact, the conventions can discuss and vote all they like, take decisions, but

really, the real policies are determined, as it is in the bourgeois parties. As a matter of fact, everybody is observing these talkfests that the Tories even hold and the Liberals even hold today, but they don't mean anything as you know – the Tories and the Liberals can come out for gay liberation, they can come out for all kinds of concepts – women's liberation – concepts which are quite novel in bourgeois circles, on which these parties base themselves – but they don't mean anything, because the policy of the government is determined not by those talkfests and discussions – it is determined by the cabinet, determined by the inner circle. Well, so likewise in the NDP; this became very clear, very shortly. The conventions could discuss and vote all they wanted, but when you got down to it, everything was decided by the parliamentary leadership.

CCF Founder J.S. Woodsworth's pacifism… and betrayal

Now I want to say a few words in the time at my disposal about one personality, which will give you some insight into this. One personality, a key and important personality – and that's J.S. Woodsworth, which will give you some insight into its *(the CCF's—ed)* program – a key aspect of its program – and reveal to you the true treachery of reformism. You know, many of us have read a bit about reformism in other countries. We're perhaps even acquainted with the betrayal of the German working class by Noske and Sheidemann, who were leaders of the mass German Social-Democratic Party, who supported the war – World War I – or who are even familiar with the Kautskys. Thanks to Lenin's and Trotsky's writings, we have some acquaintance with the betrayal of reformism in some other countries, but there's not much acquaintance with the betrayal of reformism in our own country. But we have our Noskes, Sheidemanns and Kautskys – we have them all. As a matter of fact you could say the CCF leadership, the entire parliamentary leadership, including J.S. Woodsworth, played the role of Noske and Sheidemann on the eve of World War 2. J.S. Woodsworth, sometimes called "the saint in politics." This is the sub-title I think of his biography, written by his daughter. And of course the movement at that time was declared to be "the conscience of the House" – that's how it was presented to us as – that was the role of the CCF.

Well, in *Labor Challenge* in March 1950, there was a bit of a study of J.S. Woodsworth because the role of J.S. Woodsworth became a matter of some contention. Some people thought that Mr. Woodsworth was much superior than Mr. Coldwell, and Mr. Douglas, so we took the occasion to talk about a very important experience in the history of the (...) CCF, pardon me. The CCF was a pacifist party. This is perhaps the most significant

aspect of this movement – a very important aspect of the movement, that it was pacifist – pacifist, antiwar. The sentiment against the coming war was very great, very great. A while ago we had a film down here called "Broken Lullaby" – it was a radical film which reflected the pacifism which was general, in the Thirties, which even Hollywood put out effective films – "All Quiet on the Western Front," that dealt with this sentiment, tried to respond to it for various purposes.

Well, the CCF was a pacifist movement. If you could say there was anything it was committed to on a programmatic basis – it was against war. I read you part of the Regina Manifesto that committed against war. Of course war was the overriding issue, because everybody feared and perhaps even knew we were hell-bent for World War 2. So this was the key aspect of the party's program – it was a pacifist movement. And the pacifist movement was broad. It was the CCF, plus, it went farther than them – but the CCF was able to establish itself as the most sincere, the most honest, the most consistent antiwar movement. Now, the movement that you're acquainted with – the movement that goes into the streets, that has an independent character, that mobilizes individuals and tries to develop their consciousness and projection in struggle against the government – it was a movement that attempted to express this broad sentiment that existed in the country, and tried to be the symbol of this sentiment and (…) committed itself to implement that sentiment, to defend its interests. So it was a party that was opposed to the coming war – World War 2 – very firmly committed to it, in the Regina Manifesto and its leading personalities.

But that was changed overnight – just like that. The party was committed to oppose World War 2. But the party voted for World War 2! Without a convention, without an assembly of any level of membership – no assembly at any level of membership. You couldn't call it anything else but a great betrayal of the membership of the CCF – an incredible betrayal because it was a reversal. It wasn't just a dereliction, it was a reversal of the party's position – because in September of 1939, the CCF parliamentary caucus voted for the war. It voted for the war, although everybody knew it was committed to oppose the war. Mr. Woodsworth didn't vote for the war – so a certain aura remained around Mr. Woodsworth as a person who didn't betray. Well, I don't know what that does for a party; it sort of gives the party a double image, you see – you can't take a position on this party, because you see while the party's parliamentary leadership betrayed the people on this basic question, nonetheless there was a saving grace with Mr. Woodsworth. Well, it wasn't much compensation, because we went into the war with the added vote of the CCF.

I don't know whether you can appreciate the significance of the CCF's betrayal. I think you have to know the climate of the times, and the aspirations of the masses, their concern about the war. I think you can say the war would not have taken place without the support of the Woodsworths, the Coldwells and the Douglases, not only in Canada but other parts of the world. (It) could not have taken place without the betrayal of the social-democrats – the reformists, including the Stalinists – because there was a massive opposition to the war, and they played an important role in overcoming that opposition – that's what their function was. Trotsky characterized it very well, I think. He once remarked that this pacifism – of the Coldwells – had its allotted part to play in the mechanism of war, like poison gas, and the ever-rising pile of war loans. Without the aid of the social-democrat and Stalinist misleaders of labor, on a world scale, who can doubt that World War 2 would have been impossible? This is the role they played. I've heard at some time about the analogy of the packing house, you know, the sheep and the goats are part of the operation that takes the rest of the cattle of various character up the ramp to the slaughter. They have to have their own kind, you see, to take them forward. There's a resistance to being prodded by some other species, namely homo sapiens, and so they have to get some other stooge to take them forward, and that's what the CCF leadership did.

Tommy Douglas blackmails the CCF convention delegates

They played that role. They took the masses – Judas goat, someone said, okay – they took the masses to the war. They all did, when you get down to it. As a matter of fact, Mr. Woodsworth was just as much a party as anybody. As a matter of fact his role – whether he did it consciously or not – is even more diabolical, more diabolical, because he got up in the House, a well-known pacifist, a man of the cloth, he got up in the House and he said, well, he was going to cast his vote against the war – but, he turned to the House and said – that he is very proud of the role, the position that is now going to be enunciated by M.J. Coldwell. He made a personal declaration on the greatest social issue of the time, (…) he stood aside, he said, well, the party's position is going to be enunciated by Mr. Coldwell, and I am opposed to the war and I am making a statement of conscience – his own personal conscience. And so we went to war.

As a matter of fact, that's not unusual because in a study on Mr. Woodsworth, there's another little comment about him. This is his socialism, this is the socialism of some of these leaders – it's personal, it's intimate, it's not related to the masses – to the class, and the mobilization of

the class. Mr. Woodsworth was involved in another situation that Ernie Winch related once – *(Winch)* was one of the left wingers in the *(CCF—ed.)* Mr. Woodsworth took a job, he was a worker-priest you might (say); he broke from the United Church and went down and worked in the docks, at a time when the Canadian government was sending arms to smash the new workers' republic across the Pacific. He was informed by Ernie Winch that one of the goods they were loading on one of the freighters were military goods to smash the workers in Russia. He was indignant. What did he do? He dropped the dolly and walked off the job and made his personal declaration again. He didn't do anything about convincing anybody else they shouldn't do this. He didn't even make the slightest effort – he was concerned about his own personal status, his own state. Well, it's not a very effective social action, to walk off yourself.

And, in this case, in the CCF, he played an even worse role, because there was a convention shortly after the vote of the party and Mr. Woodsworth had some second thoughts about it. As a matter of fact, it's reported in Grace McInnis's biography of her father. But he did not go to the convention. As a matter of fact, he made a statement – I don't know whether I can just put my hands on it; oh yes, here it is – having made the record, he resigned himself to accepting the National Council's and the parliamentary caucus's support of the war as the voice of the movement. At the October 29, 1949 national convention, many antiwar delegates who were looking for leadership – they received a short note, and it read in part: "I feel I should resign as national president" – he just walked off completely (…) "because my personal position on the war differed from that of the other members of the National Council and therefore, I take it, from the members of the movement." So he deserted the members of the movement who might have expected something – could have expected something – from him.

So, he played that role, and *(all)* the CCF, kit and caboodle, played that role. It took the masses in Canada, and their counterparts in other parts of the world – it took the masses into World War 2. So, overnight you had the fundamental policy of the party dumped, and the leadership of the party completely substituting themselves for the membership. *(These)* leaders (…), aside from just ignoring party policy, *(…also)* have been known in the CCF to blackmail the party to adopt the policy which they support. For instance, I just referred to one incident in 1961 Saskatchewan CCF convention. The delegates passed a motion urging Canadian withdraw from the NATO war alliance – a very burning issue, still. The delegates in their overwhelming majority voted such a resolution. Douglas intervened, as a withdrawing leader of some 20 years standing in the Saskatchewan CCF,

and urged them – well he intervened and forced the re-opening of the question after it had been voted on, and he reversed the decision. He said he would be most unhappy, he said, if the party adopted this position. And so, nobody wanted Mr. Douglas to be unhappy in this party, and the position was reversed, after the position had been established, (for) withdrawal. Mr. Brocklebank, well-known CCFer, now NDPer, chimed in "even if we have misgivings, I propose we endorse Mr. Douglas's stand, and give him a chance to proceed on this basis." He went further, of course – he also got them to table a previously adopted position proposing presenting the position of the Saskatchewan convention as being opposed to Canada joining the Organization of American States *(then overtly a tool of White House Latin American foreign policy-ed.)* — he convinced them to dump that too.

The blunted struggle for Medicare in Saskatchewan

So, they blackmailed the delegates. I'll just say a few words – the time is going rapidly – about the CCF in power in Saskatchewan, because I don't think you can just talk about the betrayal of the basic position of the party, but a further experience may be necessary. Here's where the CCF got elected to office, very early in 1944. It got elected, got defeated, and got elected again. What's it achieved in Saskatchewan? I'm not going to try to make a real balance sheet of the situation, but I might take up a few episodes – one episode particularly which is very revealing. The Saskatchewan CCF got elected to office with a mandate to implement a medicare program. It had a mandate, it went to the electorate, and the electorate voted for it, and the CCF in Saskatchewan committed itself to implement a medicare program. It was the first attempt to introduce a compulsory prepaid medical care program anywhere in the North American continent – the most significant action in this direction – a real breakthrough projection. Douglas shelved it when he met the first opposition – he shelved the whole project even though he had a mandate, until a new election. He got the new election, so he was mandated again; he was mandated again to implement medicare.

Well, in the ensuing period, the lines were drawn very, very sharply. Very sharply. The Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons moved in very boldly with the support of the Canadian Medical Association and it happened, by law, to have control of whether doctors no matter where they came from and what their capacities were – it had control over whether they could practice in the province of Saskatchewan. So the doctors declared a boycott; these men of bandaids declared a boycott

against the medicare program. So immediately some doctors who were more far-seeing, who took the Oath of Hippocrates more seriously – they started to come to Saskatchewan to help carry out the medicare program. But they couldn't get licensed, because the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons had control of the licensing. What to do?

Well, it would seem obvious to me that Mr. Douglas and the Saskatchewan government with 41% of the vote and 38 seats in the House, the overwhelming majority, would deprive this body of its power to make or break doctors – just deprive them of it. It didn't make a move in this direction. Not only did the Saskatchewan College of Physicians and Surgeons refuse to license doctors to practice in Saskatchewan, who were sympathetic to the medicare program, but through their power, they deprived any doctor who wanted to practice in the medicare program, from the use of the hospitals – they controlled the hospitals. But of course as everybody knows, the hospitals in Saskatchewan, as everywhere else, are actually financed from public funds – tremendous subsidies go into the maintenance of the hospitals. What do you think could be done about that? Wouldn't you think it would be logical for a government that is committed to a medicare program to say, okay, we're now going to take the hospitals under public ownership – we're not going to allow you to stop doctors from becoming doctors and practicing in Saskatchewan, and we're not going to let you prohibit people from using the hospital facilities.

We had the ironic situation where the rank and file, because the *(CCF)* did not push through these projections, had to start to build up community clinics with their small resources – had to set up community clinics to get around, and try to implement the medicare program although the party had a plurality, a mandate to carry this out. One rather interesting anecdote which is revealing, was that the Minister of Health's wife was pregnant, and she had to have hospital facilities, and she couldn't get into the hospital. Her doctor was not part of the Saskatchewan Physicians and Surgeons team and they barred him from hospital, and she had to go to one of these private-operated, public-initiative *(grassroots)* organizations called the community clinics to have her child delivered. Well, they didn't carry a fight on that question. And of course, anybody who wanted to make a balance sheet could say that substantially – despite its term in office and its plurality – the Saskatchewan CCF has done very little that would inspire anybody that the CCF's an important alternative.

The Left's sustained fight for a socialist CCF

Now I want to take up one other aspect – I know my time's practically done – one other aspect of the topic, and that is the fight for a socialist CCF. The CCF

started to swing widely to the right. During the war, of course, it destroyed its basic *(program—ed)* – compromised itself -- sold out its basic program, its pacifism; but it also in the ensuing period started to swing widely to the right. You didn't hear anything about public ownership in the CCF in its later years. As a matter of fact, the party started to write new manifestoes, although they were always conjunctural manifestoes; they were temporary documents which were presented to this convention and that convention, and surreptitiously we started to find that private enterprise had a certain role to play, that the concept of the mixed economy was a tolerable and acceptable concept for the CCF. It dropped (…) its opposition to the Senate – it started to modify its position.

The movement became more and more – I used the word "movement" – less and less a movement and more and more a political party, an electoral party, obsessed with the problem of finding the gimmicks and tricks to get elected – that's what it became obsessed with *(... break in tape)*

Okay, there were of course native forces in the CCF that resisted the rightward course of the movement – of course there were. As a matter of fact there were some who called themselves Marxists who remained in the CCF, particularly in British Columbia, some of the elements of the Socialist Party who never joined in the launching of the CP *(Communist Party)* such persons as E.E. Winch and others – they remained in the CCF. But they had a certain feeling for class politics, of principled politics. And there were other elements who in the process of experience became radical, became radicalized, and started to object to the whole rightward course of the movement.

Well, that wasn't tolerated by the CCF leadership. Sometimes they talk on certain occasions, they did talk as if the CCF was an all-inclusive party, but the radicals found it not to be so. As a matter of fact, history records that Mr. Woodsworth, on behalf of the National Council of course, suspended the entire Ontario Section – just suspended the membership – everybody, the whole operation – in the name of the National Council, he suspended and then dissolved the Ontario Provincial Council, and immediately called for a new Provincial Convention to re-organize the CCF in Ontario. That was in 1934. Just got rid of all the radicals – one big swoop! He said none of you are members of the CCF (we've) deprived you of your membership, and we're going to organize it (the CCF in Ontario) on a new

basis, on grounds that are suitable to us, and you had to apply for membership. That was, of course, an incredible method of operation, to frustrate the democratic process. But there were perhaps other ways which were not quite as shocking – didn't involve whole sections.

But there were left-wing oppositions developing in the party – they were consistently harassed. The party leadership even dissociated themselves from left-wing members who happened to get elected into the House *(of Commons)*— particularly one by the name of Rodney Young. He was red-baited in the House and the party didn't defend him. He was accused by Humphrey Mitchell of being a "Trotskyist" because he was opposed to NATO – the party just froze him out, they eventually froze him out. At any rate, there was a group called the "Socialist Fellowship" that came into existence in British Columbia (and) one of the leading (spokes)persons was Rodney Young. This caucus – this tendency – in the party, composed of prominent persons in the party, was declared "an opponent political party" by the National Council in 1951 – just declared an opponent political party. Rodney Young fled before this *(pressure)* and repudiated his support for the Socialist Fellowship. Then there was a long hassle among the left-wingers *(over)* what they would do. So, ultimately they were prevailed upon to dissolve themselves. Well, of course they were threatened with expulsion. So they capitulated *(rather than)* face expulson.

I would say generally without taking up too much more time (that) the left-wing was dissipated – the native left-wing in the CCF that came out of the experience of the CCF. This – root and branch – was part of it *(the CCF)*. *(It)* had no other experience. This left-wing went through a continual period of destruction of *(its)* forces until, preparatory to the "Winnipeg Declaration," *(it was)* brutally finished off. The party leadership decided it had to get rid of the "Regina Manifesto." That document became the most contentious document in the movement, around which the left and right polarized. The party leadership said finally they wanted to get rid of "that old socialist crap" – they used these terms, they used *(them)* quite openly. And they presented a new document, the "Winnipeg Declaration." I was going to read a few sections and we haven't got time.

The Left made its final effort – the native left, E.E. Winch and others – to fight for a socialist policy in the (CCF) at the time of the "Winnipeg Declaration." This was about two years before the founding of the New Democratic Party. And quite related -- and I'll take that up again in the next talk – "The fight for a socialist CCF" which is one of the sub-titles of the class tonight – actually didn't really develop on a very fruitful scale from the resources of the experience of only the CCF itself. There was nothing in the

CCF from which to build an effective and important left wing, within the resources, within the experiences of what you might call the "native elements" within the CCF – the reformists. Of course the party itself wasn't structured to permit this– I'm not talking about the expulsions, I'm talking about the low level of politics in the movement. There was no atmosphere for political discussion, no atmosphere for exchange of views. The party was led, and the members were an electoral machine, and so it was extremely difficult – the whole nature of the movement, being a parliamentary movement and giving such weight to the parliamentary caucus – it made it almost impossible for persons who only had an experience within the movement itself – perhaps under the influence of the "Regina Manifesto" – to carry on a principled and firm struggle for a socialist policy.

As a matter of fact, that struggle – the struggle for a socialist CCF – was carried by persons who had a different experience and a different tradition. And I think you can say it was carried in general by the Trotskyists – it was carried by the Trotskyists. Mr. Coldwell said that. He made that *(statement)* as a charge, as a slander against the Left – but there was some essential truth in that. As a matter of fact, Mr. Coldwell went so far as to say that the "Regina Manifesto" was in part framed by Trotskyists. He went that far because Trotskyism was a big issue. At his 25th Anniversary speech here at the Women's Building at the Exhibition *(the CNE in Toronto)* he made a speech in which he said that there were some Trotskyists at the *(adoption of)* the Regina Manifesto and they had some influence. He didn't say how much influence they had, because everybody knew that others had quite a bit of influence, and the overwhelming determining factors in it – there weren't any conscious Trotskyists – but soon in the *(CCF)* it became very obvious that the forces that were attempting to capitalize, to crystallize a left wing in the CCF, had the support of and sought inspiration and encouragement from the Trotskyists.

So this struggle took place from outside, from inside, and in a combination of both processes. The fight for a socialist CCF – well of course the Trotskyist position was unconditional support of the CCF once the CCF was definable as a labor party – a reformist labor party, no mistaking about that, a very firmly reformist labor party – once it was established by ourselves on the basis of our analysis of what was taking place, we gave unconditional support to the CCF. We did not consider that that was our party, but we gave unconditional support of it because we became convinced that this movement was going to be an inevitable part of the experience of the radicalization of the workers – for a whole period. Therefore we said we were prepared to go through that experience with

that class, and we give unconditional support – we laid no terms or conditions to our support to the CCF, although we didn't consider it our party – it was a reformist labor party formation.

We even went further. We even practiced a tactic which is called "entrism." And I'll just say a few words about that. In order to become part of that experience, at one very important conjuncture, we decided that it was beneficial for the development of the socialist force within the CCF, for the Trotskyists, to give up their independent existence as an organization. We put our politics before our organizational concepts. Our organizational concepts for us were only an instrument of our politics – our principled political positions. And we said since the party *(the CCF—ed)* is not a federated party, and since it's not possible to join this party with your full views as a member -- *(which)* they will say is an "opponent political party – we're going to **give up** our independent political party and go into the CCF – which we did in 1952. Of course, it was not long before the CCF raised the same scare (as) against the Socialist Fellowship you see – that you're a "party within the party" – and you're outlawed. You're outlawed and you can't be a member of this political party.

But this was the flexibility that we adopted in our attempt to build a socialist current in the CCF. I just want to summarize now, in a few comments. The CCF around this period of the 50s became what one of the writers, in a rather important book *A Protest Movement Becalmed*, says – a protest movement becalmed – that's what it became (…) – it wasn't going anywhere, since its leadership was demoralized, because they had no concept of the actions of the masses of course – they were suffering electoral defeat, the crucial question for them – to suffer electoral defeat, and of course the climate was against electoral victories – aside from what the CCF leadership did, no matter what the program of the party was. The climate was unfavorable – you know, this was the period of MaCarthyism, a general period of economic boom, of modest relative economic boom, and a period of MacCarthyism – this had some considerable effect on the chances of the movement.

But the CCF leadership started to make a new ploy. The fusion of the two mainstreams of the Canadian labor movement took place – the fusion of the TLC (Trades & Labour Congress) and the CCL (Canadian Congress of Labour), and this posed new challenges for the CCF. And they decided in the process of this situation to write "finish" to the CCF experience, to rid themselves of the "Regina Manifesto" and lay the basis for a new political formation, called the New Democratic Party, that came into being a few years later.

For the revolutionary socialists, as the CCF went down the drain and continued to liquidate the radical forces within it, which came to a climax with the adoption of the "Winnipeg Declaration" – for the revolutionary socialists, *(there was)* another factor which was extremely important (and) which had to be taken into account, and that was the new process of radicalization *(that)* had taken place, **outside** of the CCF, completely outside of the CCF. This is the rise of what some people call the "New Left." The New Left were of course new radicals who had come from outside of the classical organized forms of radical expression. They came from outside of the CCF – they didn't go to it, and in a sense, they rejected the CCF, the new radicalization did. They rejected the CCF because they saw the CCF as a party of the establishment. It was *(such a)* party – even if they may not have been acquainted with its whole course of evolution. *(It was seen)* as clearly a party of parliamentary reform, and not of struggle. It was a party committed to parliamentary action, and not extra-parliamentary action – *(it)* resisted if it did not fundamentally oppose extra-parliamentary action. It was part of the establishment in the eyes of the new radicals.

So this radicalization started to take place completely outside of the CCF. Of course, the Communist Party was also in the depths of a great crisis. This crisis came to (…) a very important head, with the revelations of Khrushchev, the Premier of the Soviet Union, as to the crimes of Stalin. This revelation of Stalin's crimes shook the Communist Parties on a world scale, but extremely hard in Canada, and cast out almost the entire leadership of the Party. And so this gave new opportunities to revolutionary socialists, to attempt to find new cadre elements. So the CCF period closes, at the very edge of the new radicalization, which is the subject of the next discussion. *(End of class #2, and the following responses by Ross Dowson):*

Question & Answer period: a short history of the entry tactic

I'd like to take up that question on entry because it was posed in the panel that I sat in on, and (it) went off in another direction – so I think it's worth saying something about entrism. It's the only place it's going to come up in the class, I think.

Entrism is a tactic first devised by, suggested by Trotsky to meet a particular problem. As you know, naturally the revolutionaries anticipated with the success of the October Revolution, that the workers en masse would break from the social-democratic parties, since they had betrayed on the most elementary plane, the historical and immediate interests of the

class. And the thought that everybody would come over, and the Communist Parties would become **the** mass parties of the working class in every country of the world – which was to be anticipated, because they had been proven correct on all counts, armed with the experience of the October Revolution. That didn't happen. The workers were conservative, and even though many of them observed the betrayal – felt the betrayal – many of them in country after country weren't prepared to leave the social-democratic parties. They thought there was still something in them – they had the feeling of vested interest in them, and they refused to come to the Communist Parties.

So then how could that division in the working class – the radical working class – be overcome? Lenin suggested the tactic of the "United Front." That's where the parties marched separately, since they are separate entities, but fight together, independently under their own banner, around a commonly agreed-upon proposition. Okay, that was a tactic, a valuable tactic. This tactic was pretty well undermined by what someone in our family called, the "boring from within" policy of the Communist Parties. The Communist Parties discredited the "United Front" to a large degree – the whole concept of the United Front. So you had a situation in the 30s where you had, in some countries, mass Communist Parties, mass Socialist Parties, and you had the Trotskyist Parties trying to become parties – Trotskyist nuclei – trying to become parties.

How to overcome this fracturing of radical workers – because there were radical workers in all these parties. When Trotsky projected the "French Turn," as someone called it (…), he projected it for the French Trotskyists. There was a specific situation in France where the social-democratic formation – a reformist formation, I think it was the SFIO – had contained within it new radicalizing forces – *(those were)* the particular circumstances in France. There were forces coming towards Trotskyism, but they were still tied to this movement. How could the Trotskyists reach them? Well, it was that conclusion of the Trotskyists – Trotsky's inspiration – the French Trotskyists, they should give up the independent organization that they'd structured – it was weak and it was isolated – and they should fuse their force with the radicalizing forces in the SFIO. And then, having gone through a very short, quick experience with these radicals, they would re-constitute a much more effective Trotskyist movement after these short experiences with these workers, who had organizational prejudices against Trotskyism but who had a fraternal attitude toward the Trotskyists and who were approaching political agreement with them. So it was a tactic.

Now that concept of entry has been developed, and applied in other circumstances. For instance, we applied it twice in Canada. I'll just refer to

the one incidence, in 1952, which I referred to in my talk. We decided that there was some possibility for us, having pulled together some basic cadre, as an independent force, to fuse with some radical elements who were carrying a fight in the (…) CCF – to fuse with them, and go through a quick experience with them – not a smash and grab experience – we had a different concept. We thought the radicalization was going to go through the CCF for a longer period, and since the CCF was going to be the vehicle of the radicalization, we were so small that we couldn't appear as a viable alternative to the workers who were committed to the party, and therefore there was no merit in maintaining the independent section, the independent group or organization of the Trotskyists. It was preferable that we got rid of that. We were invited by various CCFers to come into the CCF. Various persons invited me, although I was executive secretary of the League – particularly David Archer and Bill Temple *(prominent Toronto CCFers—ed)* – they both invited me to join the CCF.

So we said okay, we're not fetishists about this organization. Of course we didn't give up our democratic centralist character; we gave up the public face of the movement – we're going to go in there, and we're going to fuse with those radicals who are in the process of ferment. So it was a tactic, in which we didn't give up anything substantial – we didn't give up our program, we didn't give up any of our ideas. And we went in together – we didn't appear immediately as a bloc in the party – we didn't want to create that *(an open bloc—ed)* although we did exist as that in a sense because we had a common ideology – we didn't come in suddenly and say "HERE WE ARE" you know, as we were before, and now we're going to rescue you, and save you, somehow. We went in as individuals, although people knew us very quickly – we didn't hide our views, *(but)* we didn't declare our organization. We needed an organization but in a sense our organized form went underground, because we knew that if we had a public structure, they would not accept us – they'd use this against us. So, I don't think we gave up anything of any substance at all, and we had an opportunity to fuse ourselves with the radicalizing experience. Now, I could go further into that, but I'll just leave it because it's a big question. But it's an important tactic, and it's developed in part in some documents we've written which should be available shortly.

Q & A: the collapse of pacifism before the war drive

Pacifism, the question one of the panels raised – how (…) was the party leadership able to reverse the position of the party with so little trouble? Well of course, the climate was moving against the pacifists, of course as the capitalist class prepared the war, were moving in against pacifism – you know, they were trying to make out that they were a bunch

of cowards, a whole range of *(slanders)* – they're not loyal, they're not anti-fascist – all kinds of preparations were being made by the capitalist class to prepare the masses for the war, to indoctrinate them, to weaken them. However, there was still a certain formation, a broad *(pacifist)* sentiment. I would say the big factor that allowed the CCF leadership to reverse and rid the party of that position, of opposition to the war, was that the movement was – I was going to say pacifist *(speaker chuckles)* – it wasn't a mobilized movement composed of persons who had developed some understanding of the nature of war and who had an organization which was involving itself in ongoing struggles – such as the anti-Vietnam war movement today – it was a sympathy, a sentiment, which is encompassed in this parliamentary party, which was strictly parliamentarist – strictly parliamentarist – so it had no capacity to resist. It was weakened from resisting the developing fumes of chauvinism which the capitalists were promoting, and it was weakened also because (it) had no structure *(within)* the CCF except the parliamentary party, and *(some)* persons *(who)* primarily expressed the authority, the goodwill and the prestige of some individuals like Mr. Woodsworth. And their individual role was very important, I think. Very important in reversing this whole process. Mr. Woodsworth did it very – I wouldn't say he did it consciously *(or say)* what element of consciousness *(there was)* in his actions. At any rate, this process obviously made it very practical – as a matter of fact, I was going to deal more with *(this)*. There's an interesting item in the book *The Protest Movement Becalmed* and he *(this author—ed.)* relates there how the party leadership as a whole, not just Woodsworth, tried to explain what they did. They said "we're not endorsing the war – it's true we didn't vote against it – we didn't support the war, we're just against Canada's involvement," and (…) they suggested they're going to oppose Canada sending troops – they suggested that. They suggested also that – they made it very clear – they're not going to be for conscription – oh yes, they had this slogan "No conscription of manpower without conscription of wealth" – you see?

Okay, the war's on – that's an accomplished fact, so there's no use opposing it, there's nothing you can do about that. Now, you (…) have to retreat, and find another grounds – so "we'll stick fast" on this thing – "No conscription of men – manpower – unless there's conscription of wealth." Well, then they didn't even hold that position, you see, but it was a position that satisfied certain elements who wanted to be satisfied, who couldn't face the betrayal, who were not able to fight, had no form to fight – and that traded it off, you see. In a sense, this is the way the bourgeoisie took us into war. There's a rather interesting article in a back issue of *Labor Challenge*, "How the King government took the Canadian people to war" – very, very astutely, very cautiously, by degrees. For instance, the King government committed itself to a referendum. The King government said "well, Canada's at war, but the people of this country will have a chance to vote

on whether Canadian conscript forces will go to the European theatre" – an incredible situation, isn't it? Where the government says no Canadian troops will go to the European theatre – it's a holocaust over there, and we're supposed to be committed to the war against fascism – *(but)* no Canadian troops will leave Canadian soil without the people of this country voting on the question (...) The King government carried that referendum – they carried it out – they won it too, but they did a whole series of things to win it. They never did win it in Quebec. As a matter of fact, the vote when it was called was just the opposite in Quebec as it was in the rest of Canada, something like 70% against and a third percent for, and the reverse in the rest of Canada.

But of course the overall weight of the vote was for conscription, for overseas service. So you see, Canada went through a whole series of experiences where the Canadian bourgeoisie had to break down the antiwar sentiment in this country. And the big problem was, there was no organized form which could crystallize the opposition. We were the only force – the Trotskyists were the only persons who opposed the war. But, as soon as we opposed the war, we were arrested. The first person who spoke against the war, Frank Watson spoke at the street corner at College and Brunswick, was arrested, just like that. The Canadian Defence Regulations had not yet been published. When we went to court to defend ourselves, the lawyer didn't have the law – the law wasn't even formally *(issued)*. Then our press was immediately stopped. The Lieutenant-Governor made a statement to the House (of Commons) that the Trotskyists were a subversive group, but there was no formal law to my knowledge passed – what they had was they passed the War Measures Act, and *(under)* the WMA a person who printed or set the type – anybody who was in any way associated with the paper of an opposition to the war force (…) was co-guilty – and so nobody would print our paper. I remember (…) there is one issue in which the paper was never run off – the issue at the very time of the enforcement of the War Measures Act. The comrades prepared the type and everything and the paper was never run off. We were never able to publish a paper – as a matter of fact the situation in Canada was unprecedented. In the States our comrades openly functioned against the war, with their full program, all during the war. So likewise in Great Britain, strange to say. In Great Britain, the Trotskyists were able to oppose the war all during the war, but in Canada we were completely suppressed. And of course the suppression was possible because of the sell-out of the CCF (and) the sell-out of the LPP (*Labour Progressive Party, wartime name of the Communist Party of Canada-ed.)* and our little forces which were trying to resist. Well, I can't say more on that.

Q & A: the C.L.P. vs the C. C.F. and the concept of the United Front

Well, that question of the United Front – I put that in the questions there because I wanted to deal with it a little more fully, with the experience of the Canadian Labour Party. I tried to project that idea that the Canadian Labour Party was **not** a labor party in any rational sense, in the sense that the CCF was, following the 1948 election which revealed to us that it had now got a base in the industrial proletariat in the East – that's what the 1948 election told us – we watched the election, which revealed what was a fact for us, revealed t hat the CCF had rooted itself in the industrial areas of Canada. It won in Windsor, it won in Hamilton, in Oshawa – It won a series of by-elections and then (…) the general election in Ontario showed that the party had also rooted itself in Toronto. But up until then, there was no evidence – we were not aware – that the CCF was anything more than just an agrarian protest movement, with some connections. That was a qualitative change for us – that was a labor party, a labor-based party, you see. Not only had it been endorsed in '43 by the CCL, the Canadian Congress of Labour, but we didn't think that this was a decisive matter, being endorsed by the CCL, because the CCL was the smallest of the two trade union centers, and we knew also that there were some unique circumstances – A.R. Mosher and other individuals had been founders of the party, and to a large degree we sensed that it was an action from on top – and didn't reflect anything rooted in the movement. You know, conventions are always suspect – CCF conventions and particularly trade union conventions – you can't determine what's going on in the ranks of the labor movement by merely weighing the votes at (…) labor, trade union conventions, because to a large degree in most of those conventions, the "pie-cards" are the delegates, the staff are the delegates, and very few rank-and-file militants get elected except in some unusual circumstances, to a convention like that. So we discounted the '43 endorsation by the Canadian Congress of Labour. But the election results proved to us that it had become a labor party.

Now, what's in common with this – the Canadian Labour Party? What's it got in common with this? Well, the Canadian Labour Party was merely a coming together of diverse tendencies of the Left, who called themselves the Canadian Labour Party, but they were not a party – it was a united front. They were a party with a common view, a common position, with a program which one could define, and with a leadership which also was indigenous and rooted – it had an apparatus. As a matter of fact, I mentioned tonight that a couple of the leaders were members of the Communist Party, who had their own party. *(Jack)* Macdonald and Malcolm Bruce were leaders of the Communist Party, and their roots and their strength was in the CP – and their program was definable – it was a party, with an ideology – very clearly defined. But then they came together with some others, diverse *(elements),* many of them reformists, left reformists

who were without prejudice, who were prepared to come *(together)* with a united front around an election. Why did they come together? Well, I could speculate – it's quite probable it couldn't have run many candidates, and they wanted to run more candidates, and so in some ways it just became a name. You're going to run here, you know, Jack Macdonald, and I'm going to run here. I'm a member of the ILP *(Independent Labour Party),* so why don't we all get under a common umbrella – try to work out a minimum program for this election, which is suitable, and we'll present ourselves in the Canadian Labour Party.

Well, that's a united front of a temporary character, on an immediate – not a so much an issue *(as a)* circumstance. As a matter of fact, now that I go on, I realize I was wrong to say they came to a common program – they did not. The Communist Party carried its own program. (…) I read that part, (it was) somebody, was it Malcolm Bruce? Somebody I read the other night – where they defined why they were a part of the Canadian Labour Party. It was an umbrella, which gave a certain appearance to the groups of the left with their own views, with their own apparatus, a certain unity. And it was worthwhile, I suppose, but it couldn't go anywhere – couldn't last, as I showed in the previous class. No sooner did the Communist Party start to define its views in the common conferences of the Canadian Labour Party when all the demarcations started to take place. The Communist Party came out for the freedom of the colonial peoples under the British Empire. As they say, the shit hit the fan – with the labor party people, you see, they didn't go for that – they didn't want to identify with that. And there were some other things that I mentioned. Well it broke apart – the Communist Party never capitulated, never "bored from within," you see. The Communist Party came there with its own views, its own personalities, its own people, and here's what our view is, so – if it had continued, what it would have shown probably is that the Communist Party is gradually winning over those people, through its example, through its conduct – it was winning them over. But it couldn't last as a front, and that's all it was – it was an electoral front, and it was without a common, developed program. So it was not a labor party. But I put it in because they called it a labor party, and it was interesting to see what the position of our forerunners was on this question. They identified with it, they utilized it – but it could only be a short-term proposition.

Now when we said the CCF is a labor party, after the 1948 experience, that was a very important conclusion. From that conclusion we said – ah, this tells us now, this party's based on the industrial workers, it's got very firm roots. It's also endorsed by the organizations of the organized labor movement. Well, it would tell us that generally the whole radicalization of the working class in this country for the whole next period is going to be through the CCF – barring some tremendous revolutionary

upsurge of course, there always can be new developments – but in the general course of the radicalization, we projected that this is where the radicalization is going to take place. Well then, why would we be apart from it? The question posed entry very sharply – if you draw that conclusion, you'd have to say, if we can still carry our views, if we express our views, expound our opinions there, *(why)* do we want to be hung up, who do we want to be on the outside, telling them well, we as the League, or whatever we were, the Revolutionary Workers Party – think this and that. *(The workers would say)* well, that's very interesting, but I'm in this big party, and this big party can do something. You know, that's one of the characteristics of the workers – they have a certain feeling of the **magnitude** of the task.

As a matter of fact, it's one of the reasons why – one of the factors – in the hesitation of the workers to move out – they have a very – unlike petty-bourgeois radicals, like the FLQ *(the Front de Libération du Québec)* – they have no concept of the nature of the bourgeoisie, and the magnitude of the task. The workers do know. That's why those movements just blow off – they don't go anywhere. The workers know, they go into the shop and they see the power of the bosses – they see that if the don't have the power of the union, which was built under great difficulty and duress, you'll be out there tomorrow. If you just don't cut your hair right – that's not irrelevant, it's true – if you wore long hair up until a little while ago, the bosses threw you out of the shop, you know. It was quite a shock for me to go down to the Teamsters Union a while ago and see all the guys with long hair and beards and everything – I didn't think you could get a job like that. So the bosses had to adapt to the situation because of the union. Of course it's now become established you can wear long hair and beards *(general laughter)*.

Q & A. how the Communist Party could have blocked the diversion of the CCF

At any rate *(remarks from the audience)* on the last question, it's now a quarter after ten (…) I'll just say a few comments. Yes, I think the Communist Party of Canada had sufficient cadres in the late Thirties to block the continued development of the CCF. This is entirely speculative, of course. See, *(while)* the Communist Party did have, the CCF had no cadre. What it had was a lot of petty-bourgeois intellectuals, Oxford scholars who had sat at the feet of Harold Laski – it didn't have any real militants. A lot of them were United Church people, do-gooders – that's what it essentially was, and a few old radicals who had hung on, who hadn't enough nerve to go into the communist movement, you know – a few doddering old radicals. I went to a few of these clubs, a few of the CCF constituency

associations – they were pretty terrible. Well (…) the *(Vancouver, B.C.)* Stanley Park club was better, because it even talked socialism. Stanley Park was, it was radical. There was only one club in Toronto like that – that was the Woodbine Club with Bert Levens, who was an atheist, you see – an agnostic, pardon me – and there was a little operation there. But generally the movement was a movement of petty-bourgeois in the East, of do-gooders. The Communist Party was not a mass party, it was a small party. I don't know what we estimated last time, I don't want to change the figures – a couple of thousand, maybe, around 1936 or so – but they were young radicals – militants who had moved into the shops and made connections with workers who wanted to be organized, under the inspiration of the CIO *(the US-based Congress of Industrial Workers)*. And I think that force, if it had taken a correct line, could have blocked this development of a reformist party, which was slow to develop.

As a matter of fact it *(the CCF)* never really jelled in – it made some progress in 1943-44, it had some setbacks – it established itself in Saskatchewan and then it lost that – you know this party has had an unstable development, even though it was endorsed by the trade unions, and I think until 1948, its whole development was very questionable – where it was going. So there was a decade – a decade is a long time – and my impression is that if the Communist Party had a correct position, it could have blocked that development. And that would have been a good thing, if the Communist Party had been a revolutionary party. That's those ifs, ifs, ifs – if the Communist Party had a correct line, it could have blocked that reformist party. Of course the Communist Party didn't have a correct line. And it fed, it permitted, and even encouraged, you might say – indirectly – the development of the CCF because it didn't know how to come to grips with this aspiration of newer elements (…) *(end of tape.)*

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